[Text body exceeds maximum size of message body (8192 bytes). It has been converted to attachment.]

Dear Renata Hesse,

Today in the mail I received an advertisement for Qwest DSL/MSN
services (despite the fact that I'm already a
Qwest DSL subscriber). I'm offended, on behalf of all computing
consumers, on the technical requirements listed
for using MSN internet service...

Nowhere on the cover letter, nor in the main text on the tri-fold
brochure, is there any mention of technical
requirements listed. The words "PC" and "Windows" are not even
mentioned... On the back page, in a 3" square
block of fine print, the requirements are identified as "Windows 98
Second Edition or later operating system."
This, of course, means that only newer Windows PCs are supported, a
typical Microsoft tactic..

A couple of months ago, a friend of mine in Colorado Springs got an iMac
for his kids. He uses PC's for his
business, and was already an MSN subscriber, and wanted to set up the
iMac to use MSN for internet access as
well. Since the iMac already came with Internet Exploder (oops, I mean
Explorer!) and Outlook Express, he thought
that he already had the software that he would need to have installed.
He called MSN tech support to get
instructions on how to configure the iMac to dial in and get connected.
After waiting on hold for a while, the tech
support person told him that MSN could not be used on Macintoshes, and
that they did not support it.

My friend refused to accept this, and called me for a second opinion.
Figuring that it just used a "PPP" dial up
connection, I could see no reason why it wouldn't work with his iMac I
had him open his "Dial-up Network
Connections" dialog on his PC to get the phone number and user ID. Next
I had him look at the network settings,
and discovered that everything was set to use DHCP (Dynamic Host
Configuration Protocol).

The only thing that I can think of that is different about DHCP on the
Macintosh is that it expects to have the IP
addresses for the Domain Name Service (DNS) manually entered into the
configuration dialog. Since MS wouldn't
give the DNS addresses to my friend, I had him dial up from his PC, then
we used the "winipcfg" command to
determine what addresses had been assigned by the server.

Now armed with the user ID and password, the phone numbers, and the DNS
addresses, we set up the Internet
preferences on the iMac, and within minutes we were online with MSN from
a Macintosh! (It amuses me to do
things that others, especially MS, say are not possible!) I think that
it took us less time to solve the problem
than he spent on hold waiting for MSN tech support!

As I've mentioned at a couple of MacinTech meetings this summer, Qwest
has partnered with MSN to replace their
own ISP services, Qwest.net, in exchange for offering Qwest DSL service
to MSN users. They intend on
converting all of their current Qwest.net residential subscribers to use
MSN services by the end of the year,
except for Macintosh and UNIX users that MSN says that they can't
support. MSN doesn't offer several of the
services that Qwest has offered for years, such as multiple email
addresses for a single dial-up account, and
automatic email virus scanning. These services will be discontinued

when users switch to MSN.

I am offended not only because MSN won't support non-Windows platforms, but I'm also bothered by how they are
treating PC users... Note in the requirements that it specifies Windows 98 Second Edition, or later. If a PC user
was still running Windows 95, which would be perfectly reasonable for many home users, they would also not be
supported. While they have the option of upgrading, this could turn into an expensive proposition. Chances are
that they would be forced into adding memory, and perhaps adding disk space as well, as MS tends to increase
the need for memory and disk space with each upgrade. While Win98SE is listed as the minimum, chances are not
good that you would still be able to purchase an upgrade to 98, as it is (obviously) several years old. They would
probably need to upgrade to Millennium Edition, which may introduce enough incompatibilities that they may then
be forced to purchase upgrades to many of their applications as well... All of this time, money, and effort just to
have a faster internet connection!

As many of you know, even though my passion is really for the Macintosh, I have supported PC's for the past six
years or so. I can't understand why a DSL connection that uses an EtherNet connection to connect to the
computer, couldn't be supported adequately on Windows 95, or the first release of Win98, rather than only the
Second Edition. The "or later" clause is also troublesome when you consider that NT4 came out in 1996, so it
would apparently not be supported either. Only Win98SE, Millennium Edition, and Windows 2000 would be
supported, as well as Windows XP.

It irritates me when technology companies almost seem to go out of their way to incorporate "planned
obsolescence" into products and services in order to force consumers into upgrading. While sometimes the
improvements in technology mandate changes and upgrades, both networks and the Internet were widely available
prior to 1998, so I can't think of any reason that MSN would be unable to support high-speed internet access
from older platforms.

I believe that Apple has been extremely supportive of their installed customer base throughout the years.
Apple's software upgrades have been kept very low cost, often free or available for the cost of shipping and
handling, such as the 10.1 upgrade. Apple even used to offer hardware upgrades, where the logic board from an
older machine could be replaced with a new one, literally making it the same as the new model. Microsoft's
software upgrades are often more than half the price of the full product. Even though Apple's hardware may be
a bit more expensive in the initial purchase, I still believe that they are less expensive in the long run to own,
operate, upgrade, and support.

Microsoft has been working on new product licensing and support programs where the software and support are
virtually rented or leased, rather than purchased. The cost to purchase standalone versions of the products will
become increasingly high, until it becomes cost prohibitive to not participate in the programs, which force users
to stay up to date with current software offerings. This isn't being done for the customers benefit, it is to
provide a continuous revenue stream for Microsoft. They are afraid that

users aren't going to be convinced that
there are compelling reasons to upgrade to Windows XP or Office XP, and
that they will just continue to use the
applications and operating system that currently have, depriving MS of
any additional profit.

It has also been reported that Microsoft intends to stop supporting Java
and JavaScript, popular Internet web
site scripting languages developed by Sun Microsystems, in future
versions of Internet Explorer. The only
scripting that will be supported are Microsoft's own technologies like
ActiveX and VBscript. This is not due to
waning support for these competing tools in community, nor by expensive
or restrictive licensing from Sun. I
believe that Microsoft is once again attempting to "herd the sheep" in
the direction that is best for Microsoft,
with no regard to the best interest of the user. I'm sure that MS hopes
that since IE is so prevalent, with so
many users, that more companies will be forced to switch their web sites
to use MS web technologies, which of
course are only available on MS servers.

I feel that companies should win customers and sell products by being
better, not by being bigger. Positioning
products to eliminate competition, reduce the number of alternative
choices, or manipulate consumers down a
path of increasing dependence are desperate practices.

I have heard several sports commentators discussing the home run race
during the past couple of seasons being
driven by the competition between Bonds and McGwire. Without the
pressure of the competition, and the
incentive to outperform one another, many speculate that neither one
would have accomplished the feats that
they have. In the early days of desktop publishing, the race between
PageMaker and XPress, or Illustrator and
Freehand, made for better products all around. This kind of
competitive, open market economy is what this
country was built on.

Microsoft, in my opinion, has lost sight of this view. They are not
concerned about serving their customers, or
providing them with innovative, useful tools to increase their
productivity. At least, they are not as concerned
with that as they are with making a bigger profit, squeezing more little
competitors out of the picture, and
expanding their market share until they have a completely captive market
that they can lead around by the
nose...

To serve customers with better products, and more options, they would
want to offer the same products and
services across a broader range of platforms. I have never understood
why the Access database, such as it is,
has not been offered on the Mac, when it is bundled with Office for
Windows. FileMaker is cross-platform, with
files that are interchangeable, so I am certain that this would be
possible. Oracle has made their database run on
Mac OS, why not SQL Server? There have been plenty of email servers on
the Mac, why not Exchange? Why can't
you synchronize a PocketPC device with a Macintosh the same as we do
with Palm devices? My view is that MS
offers products on other platforms only to dangle a carrot in the eyes
of users, hoping to eventually lure them
over to the dark side (a Windows-based platform) in order to get the
rest of the features.

Apple, for instance, has produced FileMaker and ClarisWorks for Windows, and has recently released a Windows
client for its free iTools web services. Palm offers desktop synchronization software for Macintosh and
Windows, and there is free software available for Linux as well.

Microsoft has also taken an adversarial approach to open source or free software such as Linux. Corel and Viso,
before being sold out to Microsoft, had embraced the Linux community as an opportunity, offering their products
to a new audience. Why wouldn't Microsoft want to offer Office for Linux, enabling users to pick the platform
that best suited them? For that matter, it seems to me like Microsoft could do well to follow Corel's lead, and
offer its own distribution of Linux. MS could build a better installer wizard, port features like ODBC and OLE, and
make a system that could easily interoperate with Windows machines, while perhaps offering higher performance
on older hardware. They would still generate revenues by selling the OS, the applications, and the support
services.

Well there you have it ! Now, have the "Ball's" to correct these situations and mead out the punishment to
Microsoft that they have proven to deserve. A slap of the wrist won't cut it! They continue to abuse the
consumer and the competition with their unbridled arrogance even while facing the pending punishment
you are charge with coming up with. You know it and so do the nine states that will fight for justice.

Sincerely,

David C. Hill
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 | "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well         |
 | or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden,      |
 | meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe      |
 | to assure the survival and the success of liberty."        |
 |                                                            |
 | ....John Fitzgerald Kennedy - 1/20/61                      |
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        Dave Hill <dchill1@qwest.net> :-)
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